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EASTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCER OCI #1023/72

11 Dec. 1972

State Dept. review completed

Conflicting Polish Views on MBFR

Andrzej Skowronski, a Polish delegate to the CSCE talks in Helsinki, has discussed with a US delegate his views on MBFR procedural issues. He claims that the question of whether Hungary should participate in the initial talks is still open. Regarding observers, he felt that the presence of Italians, Greeks or Turks would not be "constructive" but, on the other hand, he could "understand" the Norwegian desire to be present at the talks. The existence of a special observer category, he added, did pose problems for the Warsaw Pact countries because it raised the question of Romania, but he thought a compromise could be arranged giving Bucharest observer status.

This report contradicts a talk on 7 December between the first secretary of the Polish Embassy in Washington at the Department of State. The Pole claimed his government wanted "permanent" and "temporary" participants. On the Western side, the permanent participants would be Benelux, West Germany, UK, Canada and the US; the temporary ones Denmark, Norway, Italy, Greece and Turkey. On the Eastern side, the permanent participants would be Poland, USSR, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Hungary, with no temporary participants.

We believe that Skowronski's report probably is a truer reflection of Warsaw's current thinking on MBFR--i.e., Warsaw is still very undecided about a great many procedural issues. Skowronski is a specialist in disarmament and security affairs within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and recently was assigned to Helsinki specifically to deal with CSCE and MBFR affairs. One further tidbit from Skowronski which also does not jibe with our previous views, incidentally, is his estimate that Poland has little interest in reducing the size of its own forces because such a reduction would aggravate an already worrisome domestic unemployment problem.

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